

Summarised inspection findings

St Mary's Primary School

North Lanarkshire Council

11 March 2025

Key contextual information

St Mary's Primary School (Cleland) is a denominational school located in the village of Cleland, North Lanarkshire. The school catchment area covers Cleland, Hareshaw and Bellside and is part of the Taylor High School cluster of schools. The school benefits from playgrounds surrounding the building, a trim trail and garden areas.

The headteacher has been in post for six years. He has the support of a principal teacher in leading the school. There has been significant changes of staffing over the past few years. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 122 children organised across six classes. The school reports that a minority of children across the school have additional support needs. In February 2024, a minority of children at P6 and P7 were registered for free school meals. The majority of children live in quintiles one and two of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- All staff create and maintain a highly welcoming and nurturing ethos, which supports children very well. They have developed a clear vision in consultation with parents and children which is central to the work of the school, building a community of faith and learning. Children articulate and demonstrate this vision and the underpinning values of respectful, thoughtful, team players, ambitious, resilient, friendly and honest very well.
- Children's rights are understood well and embedded by staff and children in the life and work of the school. These are displayed in classroom charters. Children are able to identify a few rights and talk about why these are important. This has a positive impact on children's experiences and their interactions with staff and peers. Relationships between all staff and children and among children are warm, caring and respectful. As a result, children's behaviour across the school is very good.
- Children in the upper stages of the school enjoy a range of roles and responsibilities. They contribute effectively to the wider life of the school through leadership groups. Teachers should now extend these leadership opportunities to all children across the school. All children participate in learning circles which take place regularly during assemblies. Children talk confidently about the difference their roles and learning circles make to the school community. For example, the digital leaders are very proud of their work in supporting their peers and staff with digital technology across the school. This is supporting them to be responsible citizens and effective contributors.
- Children experience a calm, purposeful learning environment. They make good use of classroom learning walls to support and extend their learning. Teachers provide regular opportunities for children to work together in pairs and groups. Almost all children engage

positively with their learning, listen attentively during lessons and interact positively with each other when completing tasks. When a few children lose focus during learning, staff sensitively and effectively engage and encourage them.

- Due to significant staffing changes over several years, staff have rightly identified the need to agree a consistency of approach in delivering high-quality learning, teaching and assessment across the school. Teachers talk confidently about the features of high-quality learning and what these look like in practice. Almost all staff have engaged effectively in professional learning and practitioner enquiry to develop their practice. Senior leaders and teachers are beginning to develop a learning and teaching framework to ensure equity of experience for all children.
- In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. In all lessons, teachers effectively share the purpose of learning with children and explain clearly what children need to do to be successful in their learning. As a next step, children in all classes need to take increased ownership of their learning by co-creating their success criteria.
- Almost all teachers use questioning well to engage whole classes and groups, to check children's understanding and to clarify teaching points. In most lessons, teachers extend these questioning techniques to support and challenge children's thinking skills. As a result, most children are developing their ability to explain their thinking and reasoning.
- Almost all children experience learning which is matched appropriately to their needs. All staff know children very well. Teachers plan effectively for a range of needs within their class. They judge appropriately when to intervene and support learning through a range of well-planned interventions. As a result, these interventions help children to overcome barriers to learning.
- Almost all teachers provide effective oral feedback to children during lessons. These positive and helpful interactions are supporting children to make progress in their learning. Most teachers provide written feedback in jotters. Staff should now work together to further embed the school's agreed jotter policy. This should ensure that feedback is linked to the planned learning intention and success criteria and supports children to know their next steps.
- Children self and peer assess well their work regularly. Teachers support children to set targets for literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing once a year. This provides children with opportunities to discuss their strengths and what they need to do to improve. Children would benefit from revisiting and setting their targets more regularly. This should support them to understand better their individual progress.
- Children participate in a range of well-planned outdoor learning opportunities. This is helping them to learn about their local environment and develop a range of skills. Children are increasing their awareness of managing risk through these outdoor learning opportunities. As planned, teachers should now develop a progressive outdoor learning framework. This should support children to build on, extend and apply similar skills developed at previous stages.
- Almost all teachers use digital technology successfully to support and enhance children's learning. Most children have access to a limited range of digital devices and use these successfully. For example, children take photographs and video recordings during outdoor learning activities. Digital Leaders develop their skills well during their weekly after-school club. They, in-turn, develop the skills of other pupils and staff by sharing their learning. Teachers should now ensure that all children develop digital skills progressively across the school.

- A few staff have engaged well in professional learning to develop play at early level. They are beginning to provide play experiences which consolidate and extend children's learning. Play experiences link effectively to current learning in literacy and numeracy, as well as being responsive to children's interests. Staff use their interactions and observations of play, along with children's views, to plan spaces and experiences effectively. Ongoing engagement with professional learning and practitioner enquiry should support teachers in the further development of play. They should now work with nursery colleagues to ensure greater consistency and progression across early level.
- Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching across the school. The senior leadership team and teachers have created an assessment calendar which includes a range of assessment opportunities including summative, diagnostic and high-quality assessments. Teachers use this consistent approach to inform their decisions about children's progress and next steps. This is helping them to make robust, accurate professional judgements about children's progress within and across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy.
- All teachers are developing well their shared understanding of national standards through engaging in professional learning opportunities in moderation. They do so effectively together and with colleagues in local schools and across other local authorities. This is helping to build their confidence and develop their professional judgement. This is also supporting them to further enhance their understanding of national expectations and develop the robust judgement of levels of attainment.
- All teachers plan well for children's learning across a range of timescales. They use progression frameworks linked to CfE experiences and outcomes across most curriculum areas effectively to build on children's prior learning. Teachers should now develop progression pathways across all curriculum areas. This should support them to plan learning that ensures children experience a broad and progressive curriculum. Teachers involve children well in planning and reviewing their learning which makes links across curricular areas. For example, they ask children what they already know, what they would like to know and what they have learned about a topic. This is ensuring children are motivated and engaged in their learning.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet termly to discuss and monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. They use information gathered about children's progress effectively to identify gaps in children's learning. This helps them to ensure all children who require support with their learning or wellbeing receive appropriate support. Staff deliver well-considered interventions which are having a positive impact on children's learning and attainment. The headteacher tracks closely the range of interventions in place for children to ensure their effectiveness on improving outcomes for children.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Children who require additional support in their learning are making good progress towards their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Almost all children at early level can identify rhyming words confidently. They listen well to the teacher to follow instructions. They need to continue to develop skills in turn taking and listening to others during group tasks. Most children at first level contribute their ideas and opinions in group and class discussions well. They communicate clearly and audibly. Most children at second level contribute regularly during group discussions, offering ideas, knowledge or opinions well with supporting evidence. They successfully identify the feature of spoken language, for example, body language, gesture and tone. Across the school, children require further opportunities to apply learned skills to a range of contexts.

Reading

- Most children at early level are developing well their knowledge of sounds and letters. They recognise these within names and picture books. They need to build confidence to read common words. At first level, most children read familiar texts aloud with close attention to simple punctuation. They read stories with increasing expression and confidence. At second level, children explain their preferences for particular texts and authors with supporting detail. Most children respond and reflect confidently on different types of texts. Children across the school demonstrate enjoyment as they choose story books from the reading area in class and the school library.

Writing

- Most children at early level are learning to form letters correctly. They are highly supported in writing sentences. Children now need to write independently, more regularly and for a range of purposes, including in their play. The majority of children at first level demonstrate increasing understanding of sentence construction and can link ideas in sentences. At second level, most children make effective use of vocabulary choice to engage the reader. They would benefit from further support to use a range of language techniques confidently. For example, to use simile, metaphor and a greater variety of punctuation to engage their reader. Most children across the school write confidently for a range of purposes. They can discuss what they need to do to improve their work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Almost all children at early level recognise, write, count and order numbers within 20. They accurately add and subtract numbers within 10. They should continue to develop skills in naming the days of the week and months of the year and ordering them in sequence. Most children at first level round two- and three-digit numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They tell the time accurately using half past, quarter to and quarter past. Most children at second level round numbers confidently to the nearest 100, 1000 and 10,000. They calculate simple percentages and use this knowledge to solve problems in everyday contexts. They understand and describe the benefits and risks of using bank cards and digital technologies. They should consolidate their understanding of calculating fractions of a quantity and use this knowledge to help solve problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children recognise two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They are developing well their understanding of positional language. They now need to consolidate their knowledge of three-dimensional (3D) objects. Most children at first level use mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They are less confident in identifying right angles in a range of 2D shapes. At second level, most children identify and classify a range of angles, including, acute and obtuse. They are less confident applying this to complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children interpret simple bar graphs and sort objects correctly according to shape, size and colour. At first level, most children extract key information from different types of graphs and confidently talk about ways in which they would gather and organise information. Most children at second level recognise the different ways to display data, including pie charts and line graphs. Children at first and second level should continue to develop further their information handling skills using digital technology to support their learning.

Attainment over time

- Over time, children's attendance is consistently in line with the national average. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 93.12% which is above the national average. Across all stages, 23% of children have an absence of 10% or more. Senior leaders monitor closely the absence and lateness of individual children and families. They should ensure that they understand the reasons behind all children's absence and work in partnership with parents and carers to support families to improve attendance rates for individual children. This should support children to make the best possible progress in their learning.
- The headteacher and teachers gather and track a range of attainment data for individual children in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. This data highlights that across the school, children are making good progress in listening and talking, reading and numeracy over time. The headteacher and teachers recognised that the attainment of writing had dipped across the school a few years ago. They successfully implemented plans to address this. As a result, children at early and second levels are now making good progress in writing.
- As a next step, the headteacher should now further develop robust tracking of attainment to enable the analysis of data for groups and cohorts of children to identify trends. This

analysis should support him to measure the impact school improvement initiatives and interventions more effectively.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Senior leaders and staff value and celebrate children's achievements both in and out of school in a variety of ways. For example, achievements are celebrated at school assemblies, online platforms and the 'Superstars' display board. Children who demonstrate school values are presented with certificates during assembly. They organise and lead charity events, participate in the Cleland Gala day and take part in school concerts. This supports children well to develop skills in teamwork and an understanding of how they can make valuable contributions to their school and wider community. As a next step, staff should support children to identify, share and track the skills they are developing through participation in these activities.
- Older children speak confidently about the leadership skills they are developing through opportunities such as digital leaders, pupil council, the 'Mini Vinnies' and P6 nursery buddies. These opportunities ensure children contribute to the life of the school and develop skills in leadership and confidence. Staff should now provide opportunities for younger children to assume leadership roles to support all children to develop their skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff are aware of the socio-economic context of their school community. They use Pupil Equity Funding appropriately to enhance staffing and develop interventions in literacy and numeracy. These interventions are impacting well on targeted children's attainment. For example, small group work in literacy and numeracy is supporting children well to close gaps in learning. The headteacher should now target these funds more closely to children who experience barriers to their learning as a result of socio-economic circumstances. This should help staff to increase the pace of closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- The headteacher and staff are mindful of the need to minimise the cost of the school day. They are working closely with the Parent Council to develop a position statement on the school's actions to address inequality. In doing so, they recognise the importance of highlighting their approaches and expectations to ensure all children have equity of experience.

Other relevant evidence

- All children have access to two hours of high-quality physical education every week.
- The school enjoys strong links with the local parish. Children experience regular religious observance at the church including weekly attendance at Mass. Teachers use the Religious Education in Catholic schools (RERC) planners to plan learning effectively in RE.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.